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From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre: Logic, Theology, and Philosophy in the Early Middle Ages (review)

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us," didactic poetry to the higher or rational soul, and mimetic (in the *Republic* 10 sense; see p. 195) with its two kinds, eidetic and phantastic, to the lower. According to Proclus, it is only the last three types that Plato condemns. These complexities tend to conceal a problem that is perhaps peculiar to this particular area, namely, that whereas Plato thoroughly disapproved of most of Homer, Proclus did not. That makes it unusually difficult for Proclus to present his thought as Plato's; the difference would not, of course, have appeared without the post-Platonic tradition of allegorical explanation. In her careful attention to detail Sheppard has allowed this basic problem to remain in the background.

This review has perhaps done the same to the many closely argued discussions of particular passages in Proclus that are the book's most important contribution to the study of Proclus's and his predecessors' philosophy. A full index of passages makes these valuable discussions readily accessible.

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John Marenbon. *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre: Logic, Theology, and Philosophy in the Early Middle Ages*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 3rd Series, vol. 15. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Pp. ix + 219. \$49.95.

In *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre*, John Marenbon attempts to provide an account of the main philosophical developments between the late eighth and the early tenth centuries, a period that, except for Eriugena, has been largely neglected by modern historians. Indeed, it has often been portrayed as something of a philosophical desert. Marenbon argues against such a view. His claim is not that the philosophy of the time was especially sophisticated or good, but that there was in fact a recognizably philosophical activity that was distinct from both logic and theology, although it grew out of the meeting of those two disciplines. In Marenbon's view, the unifying philosophical concern of this period was a cluster of related issues centering on the notion of essence—that is *ousia*, the first of Aristotle's categories. These issues included the status of the Aristotelian categories in general and of course the problem of universals. Marenbon argues that it is only by seeing the problem of universals within the context of this larger cluster of issues that one can recognize the doctrinal lines of development from Alcuin and his circle in the late eighth century, through Eriugena, to the School of Auxerre in the tenth.

In the course of his discussion, Marenbon emphasizes the role of the pseudo-Augustinian *Categoriae decem* for the speculation of this period. This work, which has almost universally been ignored or dismissed as a mere rehash of Aristotle's *Categories*, was in fact important during the eighth to tenth centuries especially for its differences from the Aristotelian text. Marenbon also points out the role of Boethius's *Opuscula sacra* during this period for the interpretations of the *Categoriae decem*. Other interesting features of Marenbon's account include his emphasis on

the role of Candidus in Alcuin's circle (at the expense of the more frequently discussed Fredegisus, the author of a curious letter *On Nothing and Shadows*), and his observation that the "nominalism" that some older historians thought they saw in this early medieval period "is almost entirely an illusion" (p. 142).

This volume is filled with historical information. In my opinion, however, Marenbon is too imprecise about the philosophical problems he discusses. Thus, for instance, the theory that all souls are one is described as a theory of "The World Soul," although that term refers to an entirely different doctrine. Again, the problem of universals is anachronistically described as a problem about the relation between a class and its members (p. 5). On this description, the nominalist position is characterized unintelligibly as holding that "the class" is "a descriptive term" (*ibid.*). Indeed, although the problem of universals is a major recurring theme throughout the book, Marenbon never states clearly and unambiguously just what he takes that problem to be.

This is indicative of what I find to be the main fault of the book. Too often philosophical views are mentioned without being stated or evaluated without being examined in detail. For instance, Fredegisus is said to have been "fascinated with the techniques of logic for their own sake," although his letter "gives a distinctly unfavorable impression of the mental powers of its author" (p. 63). In another work, now lost, Fredegisus employed arguments Marenbon describes as "crude" but nevertheless "far too sophisticated" for the apparently even less capable Agobard of Lyon (p. 66). Yet the evidence presented for these sweeping verdicts is very meager indeed.

Marenbon's text is accompanied by an index, a bibliography of manuscripts and printed sources, and three appendixes. One of the appendixes contains a very welcome complete and critical edition of the "Munich Passages" from the circle of Alcuin.

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Marion L. Kuntz. *Guillaume Postel, Prophet of the Restitution of All Things: His Life and Thought*. International Archives of the History of Ideas, vol. 98. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981. Pp.xv + 270. \$39.00.

Guillaume Postel was a typical Renaissance figure, given his knowledge of many languages and his achievements in mathematics, geography, cosmography, and medicine. But there was a division in Postel between the man of high intelligence, lofty ideals and spirituality. Thus he became the champion of a world united under the French king and the Judeo-Christian religion. In his later years he considered it his mission to restore the pristine origin of man. It is far from easy to unravel the various strands that make up his personality. But Professor Kuntz has admirably succeeded in giving a vivid picture of her subject's complex character.

Following a chronological order, the author has traced Postel's career in three chapters entitled "Viator," "Comprehensor," and "Congregator." Through her ex-